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INTERGOVERNMENTAL NEGOTIATING COMMITTEE FOR
THE ELABORATION OF AN INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION
TO COMBAT DESERTIFICATION IN THOSE COUNTRIES
EXPERIENCING SERIOUS DROUGHT AND/OR
DESERTIFICATION, PARTICULARLY IN AFRICA
Tenth Session
New York, 6-17 January 1997
Agenda Item 2

REPORT ON ONGOING WORK BEING DONE ON BENCHMARKS AND INDICATORS

Note by the Secretariat

I. INTRODUCTION

1. In decision (9/12), adopted at its ninth session, the INCD requested the Interim Secretariat to:

(a) continue work on benchmarks and indicators initially undertaken pursuant to INCD decision 8/8 and to invite written contributions from interested INCD members and competent organizations, to be received by October 15;

(b) establish an informal open-ended consultative process to expand on such work; and

(c) report to the tenth session of the Committee on the work undertaken, with special emphasis on impact indicators.

2. The following sections constitute the report requested in subparagraph (c).

II. CONTRIBUTIONS FROM INCD MEMBERS AND INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

3. The Secretariat received written contributions from 11 INCD member States and 3 international organizations. The comments and suggestions concerned indicators related to Convention implementation, benchmarks and environmental impact indicators in general. There may be contradictions and overlaps in these submissions, as is often the case in summaries of the totalities of views on a matter. The written contributions can be summarized as follows:

4. Indicators to measure the implementation of the Convention

(a) Only a limited number of indicators should be selected. They should be adapted to problems of implementing the Convention. They should also be representative of the zone under consideration, taking into account national, subregional and regional factors, particularly local socio-economic conditions. The indicators should be simple and readily usable by the parties concerned.

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(b) Indicators suitable for each region should be established or a minimum data set of indicators for world-wide use, or a combination of the two.

(c) Consideration should be given to conformity of the proposed indicators with the principles of the Convention, particularly by taking into account of the decentralized, "bottom-up" approach that the Convention incorporates. This would mean placing emphasis on local indicators.

(d) Account should be also taken of the actual cost incurred in developing the indicators. The collection and analysis of a high volume of data could require substantial resources in terms of finance, manpower and time. This would deter many countries from undertaking the development of indicators. If feasible, a cost-benefit estimate might be useful in allocating funds to countries on a rational basis for indicators work.

(e) Capacity building will play an important role in indicator work, particularly the development of scientific competence on the part of local institutions involved in implementation of the Convention.

(f) Information already available concerning measures undertaken and their links with the rehabilitation of productive dryland ecosystems should be a major input.

(g) Indicators developed should be practical, useful to countries and easily manageable by them, in order to facilitate reporting to the Conference of the Parties.

(h) It is important, in view of the complexity of the problems involved, that the Committee on Science and Technology (CST) should involve itself deeply in the question of indicators. An ad hoc panel might examine this important issue and develop an indicator list.

5. Benchmarks

(a) There is a clear distinction between the concepts of benchmarks and indicators. Benchmarks are used to develop correlations between various parameters and to provide a baseline for monitoring at the local, national and regional levels. There are a few databases on desertification but at present, they usually contain insufficient data from which benchmarks could be developed for measuring future trends.

(b) For this reason, it would be useful to establish multidisciplinary test sites where benchmark work would be carried out by climatologists, soil and plant scientists and social scientists. These sites would be "laboratories" in which essential interactions among scientists, economists, farmers and others would be established. Such sites could set up benchmarks to cover a wide range of soil types, climate conditions and socio-economic environments in zones affected by desertification throughout the world. The cost of establishing and managing such sites might, however, require substantial financial support.

6. Environmental impact indicators

(a) Many bodies are currently working on indicators of environmental impact, notably the Organization for Economic Cooperation; and Development (OECD), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the World Bank and the World Meteorological Organization (WMO). This work includes some indicators describing the extent, severity and socio-economic aspects of desertification, which could be useful in building indicators for Convention implementation.

III. CONCLUSION OF THE INFORMAL GROUP

7. Participants in the informal, open-ended consultative process that the Secretariat set up in response to INCD decision 9/12 included experts from Governments, international organizations and the scientific community. Many of the participants met in Geneva November 13-14.

A. Matrix of implementation indicators and analysis of potential users

8. Participants in the Geneva meeting revised the matrix of implementation indicators in the report presented to the ninth session of the INCD. Annex I contains their final product. They also discussed potential users of implementation indicators, as well as possible bodies or organization that might be entrusted with various indicator tasks. Annex II summarizes the results of that discussion.

B. Recommendations regarding future work on impact indicators

9. The informal group on desertification benchmarks and indicators also analyzed next steps for the development of impact indicators. In this connection, they offered the following general comments:

(a) The development of impact indicators should be closely aligned with on-going work within the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) for testing indicators for reporting national level implementation of Agenda 21.

(b) It is important to see indicators as an aid to decision-making, and not as an end in themselves. Thus, the process of developing and testing indicators must take as a starting point a good understanding of decision-making processes.

10. On the basis of these general considerations, the informal working group made these recommendations regarding the nature of future indicator work:

(a) The development and use of impact indicators should be closely linked with the process indicators related to National Action Programme (NAP) implementation. As such, both qualitative and quantitative indicators should be considered, especially in situations where the cost and length of time for data collection for quantitative indicators might require substantial support.

(b) The development of impact indicators should include an initial assessment of the status of land degradation and its associated cost to the country's economy and social structures. This assessment could be qualitative and/or quantitative in nature. Intended for obtaining a preliminary overview, it would serve to establish priority areas within the NAP, and justify efforts to mobilize resources. The assessment would be performed on an iterative basis, as different priorities emerge during successive phases of the NAP.

(c) Impact indicators should address both bio-physical and socio-economic concerns, and should highlight the linkages between the two. Indirect measures of impact are often as useful as direct measures.

(d) The assessment of impact should focus increasingly on local level concerns, and should include efforts to aggregate findings to the national level for effecting policy development in the NAP context.

(e) A component for capacity building should be included in efforts for indicator development, with a particular emphasis at the national level.

11. To further work on the development and use of impact indicators, and in response to the request by the INCD for an informal, open-ended process to expand on previous work, the informal group recommended:

(a) that the development and use of impact indicators be suggested as a high priority task, which could be undertaken by the Committee on Science and Technology (CST), assisted by an ad hoc panel as appropriate;

(b) that a consultative mechanism be created to inventory on-going work on impact indicators and to identify gaps in knowledge for priority action;

(c) that the inventory need not be exhaustive in scope, however it should provide sufficient background information for programme orientation; and

(d) that the CST, supported by an ad hoc panel, undertake a process of building a coalition to implement a work plan on desertification indicators, which would:

(i) use the results of the inventory referred to in subparagraph (b) to identify lead institutions for pursuing work on impact indicators, with distribution of tasks defined on the basis of themes, scales, resources and institutional interests;

(ii) assist in leveraging resources for work on impact indicators;

(iii) promote the testing of indicators at the national, sub-national and local levels, including an evaluation of their use in the NAP process; and

(iv) monitor and evaluate results with the intention of further defining core sets of indicators for wider use.

ANNEX I

PROPOSAL FOR INDICATORS TO MONITOR CCD IMPLEMENTATION PROCESSES

A. AWARENESS-BUILDING AND IDENTIFICATION OF NATIONAL PRIORITIES

	INDICATORS	EVALUATION PARAMETERS	REMARKS
1.	Functional National Coordination Unit (NCU)	· Legal status, · Resources, · Intersectoral, interinstitutional and multidisciplinary character, · Composition and mode of operation.	· The status of the NCU gives an indication of its institutional capability and of the latitude to act that the State wanted it to receive, as shown through its establishment documents, (choice of) supervisory government services, its attributes, etc., · Resources (human, financial, material), are indications of the NCU's capacity to act, · Its intersectoral and multidisciplinary character should be reflected, within the NCU, by the presence of senior staff from various sectors of activity, staff that has complementary training and experience in various socio-economic fields and in natural resource management, · The last parameter should describe how the NCU would have the various actors participate in its work, in particular NGOs and the representatives of the local populations.
2.	Effective participation of actors involved in defining national priorities	· Methods of participation of various actors, · Representativeness of various actors in the national priorities identification processes (local fora, national forum), · Nature and scope of information, education, and communications actions, · Extent of uptake: - of local concerns at the national level, - of results of national consultations at the local level.	· This entails verification of the extent of involvement of local actors in defining national priorities: local communities, basic community units, NGOs, but also young people and women as actors who are especially targeted by the Convention, · Providing local actors with accurate, complete information, in particular as concerns the CCD stakes and selected national options, is an essential factor in their full-fledged participation in decision-making.

A. AWARENESS-BUILDING AND IDENTIFICATION OF NATIONAL PRIORITIES (CONTINUED)

	INDICATORS	EVALUATION PARAMETERS	REMARKS
3.	Effective support from international partners	· Degree of participation of developed countries, · Degree of participation of international organizations, · Number of partners providing financial support, · Amount of resources available, · An effective consultation and harmonization process for actions established between partner countries.	· Commitments by international partners should lead to their participation in local and national consultations and to their financial support for the process, · Consultations among partner countries should be organized *inter alia* by the appointment of a lead country to serve as facilitator.
4.	Adequate diagnosis	· Synthesis and assessment of past actions undertaken.	

B. NAP FORMULATION

	INDICATORS	EVALUATION PARAMETERS	REMARKS
1.	Institutional framework for coherent and functional desertificati on control	· Measures identified and adopted to adjust or strengthen the institutional framework, · Measures adopted to strengthen existing institutions at the local and at the national level.	· The analysis of existing mechanisms for coordinating and harmonizing desertification control actions (at the local and the national level) should give due heed to lessons from past experiences, · This analysis should lead to measures to readjust, adapt, and strengthen existing mechanisms, in particular to ensure the participation of local actors, · The second parameter involves various actions in capacity-building that are to be implemented in the short- and medium-term.
2.	NAPs as part of the national economic and social development planning	· NAP coherent with other strategic frameworks, · Interlinkage of NAP with national, regional and local approaches, · Interlinkages of NAP with Sub-Regional Action Programme, · Agreement by the government.	· It is important to ensure that a concerted analysis has been made of existing plans. This is to include making international partners' strategies coherent at the national level, · How the CCD's principles are accommodated in other environmental frameworks (participation, partnership, programme approach, etc.) is also a significant question, · What proposals exist concerning synergy, complementarity, etc. should be determined, · The NAPs should be incorporated at all levels of the national economic and social development plan.

B. NAP FORMULATION (CONTINUED)

	INDICATORS	EVALUATION PARAMETERS	REMARKS
3.	Coherent and functional legal and regulatory framework	· Analysis of the legislation and enforcement of laws on environment, · Measures to adapt current legislation or introduce new enactments: - improved land and tree, - decentralization, - natural resource, management (forestry code, pastoral code, water related legislation, etc.).	· The analysis of environmental legislation should, in particular, lead to proposals that imply greater responsibility for local populations and more solid guarantees concerning land tenure, · All the measures should be supported by efforts to provide information on national orientations and the contents of legal enactments and regulations to the grassroots level in order to ensure greater participation by local populations.
4.	Adopted financial mechanisms	· Measures to facilitate the access of local actors to existing sources of funding, · Working out new, adapted methods to mobilize internal and external resources.	· Revision of existing financial mechanisms should make finance-related tools more accessible to local actors, · New forms of financing could comprise a "National Fund to Fight Desertification", or the promotion of funds at the local level. Within this framework, the state should define the terms and conditions for participation by various actors in the financing and management of desertification control activities. The international partners should support this process conceptually and financially.

B. NAP FORMULATION (CONTINUED)

	INDICATORS	EVALUATION PARAMETERS	REMARKS
5.	Functional integrated projects to combat desertificati on	· Inventory, adaptation and integration of projects underway within the NAP process, · Identification of new actions, · Actions strengthen the national capacity to combat desertification, in particular at the local level.	· Projects underway in resource management and desertification control should be analyzed in relation to the CCD principles and, if necessary, adjusted accordingly. This should be a gradual action geared to the medium term, · Well-adapted training, and scientific-technical programmes should be designed.
6.	Functional mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation established	· Establishment and/or strengthening of national environmental monitoring and observation capacities, · Establishment of a mechanism and criteria for monitoring the impact of the NAP.	· The affected countries should have the national capacity to harness information on the environment, · Harmonization of existing systems may be considered as a possible measures.
7.	Review of NAP and commitments by partners	· Approval and acceptance of the NAP actors involved, · Adequate resources committed, · Partnership agreements adopted.	· Validation work could be carried during a National Conference (or Forum), · Committed international partners should state their position concerning projected programmes, · Partnership agreements, (in forms that remain to be defined) should also involve local actors.

C. NAP IMPLEMENTATION

	INDICATORS	EVALUATION PARAMETERS	REMARKS
1.	Action programme implemented in compliance with priority fields set out in the convention	· Measures for national resource conservation, · Measures to improve institutional organization, · Measures to increase knowledge of the desertification as a phenomenon, · Monitoring and evaluation measures for the effects of the desertification, · Measures to improve the social and economic environment.	· The contents of the various provisions which stem from the contents of the action programme adopted by each of the affected countries. Article 8 of the Annex for Africa gives an example of the contents that might be included in the measures to be adopted.
2.	Linkage achieved with sub-regional action programme	· Development, at the national level, of programmes with a sub-regional character or having impact at the sub-regional level, · Strengthening the scientific networks, · Evaluation of action to combat desertification taken by affected countries.	· The desertification control programmes adopted at the sub-regional level should be incorporated into the national programmes, · The contribution from the scientific networks can be measured by weighing the relationship between these networks and the national actors.
3.	Effectiveness of measures in local capacity-building	· Degree of responsibility in natural resource management devolving on local communities, · Degree of decentralization achieved, · Involvement of actors in the monitoring-evaluation process.	· The degree of power which the States delegate to local actors and the support measures (training, organization, etc.) need to be clearly shown.
4.	Partnership agreements applied	· Functioning of internal partnership agreements, · Functioning of process for consultation and coordination, · Investments made during NAP implementation, · Number of international partner countries involved, · Role of the global mechanisms.	· An evaluation is needed of: - the nature and scope of the commitment made by the international partners through partnership agreements, - the degree of harmonization in these partners' actions at the national level.

C. NAP IMPLEMENTATION (CONTINUED)

	INDICATORS	EVALUATION PARAMETERS	REMARKS
5.	Strengthening scientific and technological capacities, and technology transfer	· Scientific and technological cooperation arrangements concluded, · Percentage of resources allocated to research-development and to training, · Technology uptake rate at the local level, Strengthening extension services at local level.	· Agreements being applied, or new agreements should draw on the provisions of the CCD concerning, *inter alia*, scientific and technical priorities, national capacity-building, and participation of local actors.
6.	NAP financing	· Mobilization of national resources, · Mobilization of external resources, · Role of Global Mechanism. Evaluation of effective use of function.	
7.	Provisions for monitoring and evaluating operational NAPs	· Information system on desertification at the national level, · Main actors' access to available information, · Mechanisms for consultation concerning the analysis of results, Regular production of reports, · Feedback of evaluation for programme management.	· The work entails verifying: - the capacity to collect, analyze and process information, and to produce impact indicators, - the functional efficiency of the information network at the national level. No separate desertification information office is desired but use of existing structure is preferred.

ANNEX II

USERS OR/AND INSTRUMENTS FOR PROCESS MONITORING WITHIN THE CCD

Users	Monitoring instrument	Responsibility entrusted to*
Conference of Parties	· Standardized minimum set of indicators for world wide reporting	COP/CST
Regional organizations	· Minimum Set of Regional Indicators	e.g.) Regional Coordination Unit of African countries
Sub-Regional organizations	· Minimum Set of Sub-Regional Indicators	IGAD/CILSS/UMA/SADC/ACSAD, etc.
Affected States (developing and developed countries)	· Reference List of Indicators for Process Monitoring · Customized National Set of Indicators (process and impact)	CCD Secretariat National Coordinating Body
Natural resources users at local level	· Participatory evaluation Process	Local communities with program units, NGOs

* The organizations mentioned here might subcontract tasks to specialized institutions ad-hoc panels or working groups to carry out the work